



# Iowa Weather News



National Weather Service, Des Moines, Iowa

March 2004

## New NOAA Weather Radio Stations To Be Installed This Spring

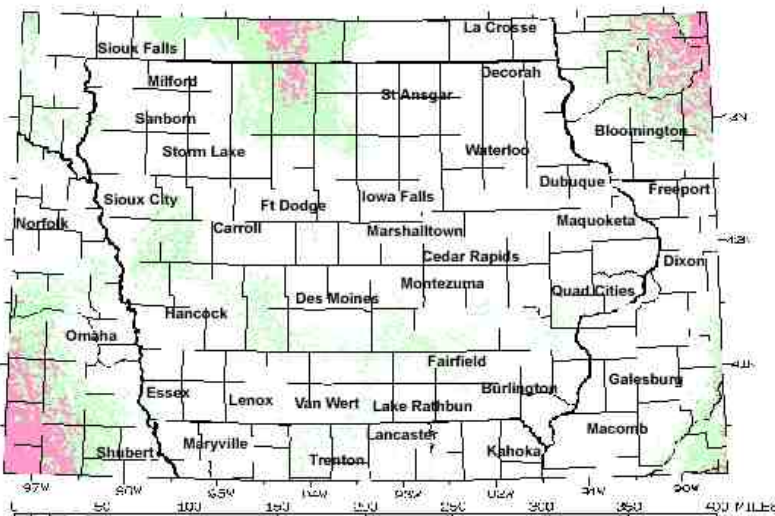
### Denison and Ringsted: Sites for New Stations

The NOAA Weather Radio Expansion partnership between the Iowa Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management and the National Weather Service (NWS) has increased NOAA Weather Radio (NWR) coverage in Iowa from around 40 percent in the late 1990s to over 90 percent at the start of 2004. Working together with gracious tower owners, who allowed NWR transmitters to be installed on their towers with no financial compensation, we have installed over a dozen new NWR stations since 1999.

### National Weather Service Partners With High School Athletic Association for Lightning Awareness

NWS meteorologist Andy Kula has partnered with Alan Beste of the Iowa High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) to inform athletes, coaches and umpires about the dangers of lightning. They have produced eight, high-quality audio Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on lightning safety to inform Iowa athletes about the dangers of lightning. B.J. Schaben, Clear Channel Radio and local sports radio/TV analyst for Iowa State University, Drake University and Iowa high-school sports, graciously recorded the announcements. IHSAA is producing and distributing CDs containing the PSAs to 88 Iowa radio stations for use during sports broadcasts. Each high school will also receive a copy for use during public-address-system announcements. The PSAs can be reproduced and distributed to anyone. Andy is also distributing these PSAs to several other local officials, emergency managers and sports organizations, including the Iowa Games and the Iowa Cubs.

**Lightning Kills — Play It Safe!**



*The map shows current NWR coverage across Iowa. Areas in white indicate good coverage; areas in green, some coverage; and areas in pink, no coverage.*

The new stations in Denison and Ringsted will close NWR coverage gaps in those areas. Another transmitter is scheduled for installation in the Hancock county area, further increasing NWR coverage.

The Denison and Ringsted stations are nearly ready and should be operational sometime this spring. The NWS will issue Media Advisories announcing the start of the transmitters' service and accompanying dedication- ceremony details.



### Upcoming Events

- March 25-27, 2004** - 2004 National Weather Association Severe Weather Conference in Des Moines
- March 29-April 2, 2004** - Severe Weather Awareness Week
- April 30, 2004** - National Digital Forecast Database Workshop, hosted by the Des Moines NWS in Johnston
- June 20-26, 2004** - Lightning Awareness Week

## County Visit Program

The National Weather Service in Des Moines recently started a County Visit Program (COVIP). In 2004, NWS Des Moines employees will visit all 51 county emergency managers in the NWS Des Moines forecast area. Many radio and television stations will be visited, along with some newspaper offices.

The purpose of COVIP is twofold. First, it will give the NWS a chance to meet some of its primary partners and customers to build and strengthen working relationships with them. Second, NWS employees will learn about counties' spotter-deployment procedures and communication systems for severe weather. This knowledge will help the NWS better coordinate with county emergency managers and the media during severe weather, thus improving the warning system.

Look for an NWS employee to be visiting your area soon.

## Media Chat

Throughout the winter, the Des Moines National Weather Service office has been working to develop Media Chat. The goal of Media Chat is to improve communication between television meteorologists and NWS meteorologists during significant weather events. This collaboration should encourage the rapid exchange of information during severe weather, when seconds save lives. Media Chat should become operational this spring. The NWS will send more-detailed information to television meteorologists when the system is ready.

## Emergency Management Conference Calls

The National Weather Service in Des Moines is starting a new program aimed at keeping emergency managers more informed of impending, most-significant, severe weather events.

The NWS will page county emergency managers, state emergency-management officials and other officials involved in the severe weather warning process, informing them that a conference call will be held by the NWS shortly. Call-in instructions will be given at that time. The conference call will contain a short briefing about expected severe weather or significant flooding within the next 12 hours, with an opportunity to ask questions to follow. The goal of the conference calls is to help emergency officials better prepare for significant severe weather.

Conference calls will only occur prior to most-significant severe weather or flooding events and only as time permits at the NWS office.

Details will be given to emergency officials when the NWS paging system is ready.



## Severe Weather Awareness Week *March 29-April 2, 2004*

Severe Weather Awareness Week is an awareness campaign with a long history in Iowa. Each spring, the National Weather Service, the Iowa Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, and county emergency-management officials conduct Severe Weather Awareness Week to promote severe-weather safety to Iowa citizens. The media is also a vital partner, providing an efficient way to reach the public.

The NWS will issue a Public Information Statement daily during Severe Weather Awareness Week. A different topic will be discussed each day.

This year, the statewide Tornado Drill and associated test Tornado Watch and test Tornado Warnings will occur on a staggered schedule, with each of the five NWS offices serving Iowa issuing a test warning at a different time. The statewide Tornado Drill will begin on **Wednesday, March 31, 2004, at 10:00 a.m., when the Des Moines forecast office will issue the test Tornado Watch for the whole state. Then every five minutes, from west to east across the state, each NWS office serving Iowa will issue a test Tornado Warning. This will begin at 10:05 a.m. and will be completed by 10:25 a.m. Each office will then end the statewide Tornado Drill by issuing an all-clear, test Severe Weather Statement.**

At the request of Iowa Emergency Alert System (EAS) chairpersons, the **TOR** (Tornado Warning) S.A.M.E. code will be replaced with the **RWT** (Required Weekly Test) code during this year's drill.

For more information on this topic or on other NWS products and services, go to the National Weather Service web site at <http://www.crh.noaa.gov/dmx>.



*Iowa Weather News* is a publication of the National Weather Service in Des Moines, Iowa. If you have comments or suggestions, please contact:

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